

1 TO THE HONORABLE SENATE:

2 The Committee on Agriculture to which was referred House Bill No. 205
3 entitled “An act relating to establishing the Small Farmer Diversification and
4 Transition Program” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and
5 recommends that the Senate propose to the House that the bill be amended by
6 striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the
7 following:

8 Sec. 1. 6 V.S.A. §§ 4608 and 4609 are added to read:

9 § 4608. SMALL FARMER DIVERSIFICATION AND TRANSITION

10 ASSISTANCE

11 (a) The Working Lands Enterprise Board shall award small farmers in
12 Vermont with grants to diversify production on a farm or to transition from one
13 form of farming to another. Grants to small farmers shall be used for costs of:

14 (1) diversifying the farm products produced by the applicant;

15 (2) transitioning the applicant from one form of farming to another;

16 (3) processing of farm products on the farm owned or controlled by the
17 applicant;

18 (4) developing an accessory on-farm business by the applicant when
19 more than 50 percent of the total annual sales of the business are farm products
20 from the applicant’s farm; and

1 (5) the initiation or expansion of a farm stand or farm store by the
2 applicant, provided that more than 50 percent of the total annual sales from the
3 farm stand are from farm products.

4 (b) The maximum amount of a grant to a small farmer under this section
5 shall be \$15,000.00 per farmer per year, and all projects funded by the grant
6 shall be completed within 12 months after receipt of the grant by the small
7 farmer.

8 (c) The Working Lands Enterprise Board shall develop a short, accessible,
9 and easily completed application form for the purpose of applications under
10 this section. The Board also shall simplify and streamline its process for
11 review and approval of applications under this section.

12 (d) As used in this subchapter:

13 (1) “Farm products” mean:

14 (A) crops grown, growing, or to be grown, including:

15 (i) plants grown for food, feed, or fiber, but excluding trees grown
16 for timber purposes;

17 (ii) Christmas trees;

18 (iii) maple sap;

19 (iv) horticultural, viticultural, or orchard crops; and

20 (v) pasture;

1 (B) livestock, born or unborn, including goods produced in
2 aquacultural operations; or

3 (C) products of crops or livestock produced by the small farmer.

4 (2) “Small farmer” means any person who:

5 (A) owns or operates a small farm subject to the Required
6 Agricultural Practices;

7 (B) houses not more than the number of animals specified under
8 section 4857 of this title; and

9 (C) is not permitted as a medium farm or large farm at the time of
10 application.

11 § 4609. CONFIDENTIALITY OF FINANCIAL INFORMATION

12 A tax return and related financial documents, correspondence, and
13 substantiating forms that are submitted by an applicant for financial assistance
14 to the Working Lands Enterprise Board under this subchapter shall be exempt
15 from public inspection and copying under the Public Records Act and shall be
16 kept confidential.

17 Sec. 2. APPROPRIATION

18 In addition to any other funds appropriated to the Agency of Agriculture,
19 Food and Markets in fiscal year 2024, \$350,000.00 of one-time funds are
20 appropriated from available federal or State funds in fiscal year 2024 to the
21 Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets for purposes of the Working Land

1 Enterprise Program implementing the small farmer diversification and
2 transition grants authorized under 6 V.S.A. § 4608.

3 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

4 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.

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11 (Committee vote: _____)

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Senator _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE